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# Language identity, linguistic diversity and political cleavages: evidence from Ukraine

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VOLODYMYR KULYK

*National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine*

**ABSTRACT.** This article revisits the notion of linguistic diversity and its function as a political cleavage. It argues that people's linguistic and cultural attitudes are influenced not only by their communicative practice but also by their identification with particular language(s) – even though they may not always communicate in that language. In Ukraine, from which my empirical data is drawn, language identity is embodied in the concept of native language that was imposed by the Soviet institutionalisation of ethnicity and came to mean ethnic belonging as much as linguistic practice. My analysis of survey data demonstrates that native language is a powerful predictor of people's attitudes and policy preferences with regard to both language use and other socially divisive issues, such as foreign policy and historical memory. This finding should also be applicable to other societies with a large-scale discrepancy between language practice and identity.

**KEY WORDS:** language identity; language practice; linguistic diversity; political cleavage; Ukraine

## Introduction

When social scientists consider language as a factor contributing to social fragmentation and eventually conflict, they mean the (main) language of everyday use, which is assumed to be the primary linguistic determinant of people's attitudes and social behaviour. Even if they deal with such culturally sensitive issues as inter-group trust or language grievances, scholars usually treat language groups as defined by communicative practice, thus

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assuming it to be congruent to linguistic and, in most cases, ethnic/cultural identity.

This article challenges such an assumption. Its main argument is that people's linguistic and cultural attitudes are influenced not only by their communicative practice but also by their identification with a particular language or languages – which, in multilingual societies, does not always correspond to communication. In Ukraine, from which my empirical data is drawn, language identity is embodied in the concept of native language that was imposed by the Soviet institutionalisation of ethnicity and came to mean ethnic belonging as much as linguistic practice. People's understandings of native language differ, but most can identify one such language that they value and want to be used and promoted widely – often more so than the language of their everyday practice, if the two do not coincide. Ukraine and some other post-Soviet countries may be unique in the widespread perception of native language as identical neither to the language of childhood nor to the main language of current practice, but a large-scale discrepancy between language identity and practice can be found in many societies across the globe. In cases of such discrepancy, linguistic diversity and its political effects should be conceived in terms of both practice and identity.

### **Conceptualisations of linguistic diversity in social science literature**

Although social scientists have long recognised that language is not only a means of communication but also a marker and a factor of ethno-cultural identity, it is the communicative function that they predominantly take into account when analysing (ethno-) linguistic diversity and its impact on social development, intergroup relations and the state policies with regard to linguistic-cultural and related matters. The language people usually speak serves as a defining criterion of language groups, which scholars conceive not just as analytical categories but as real social collectivities whose members display feelings of in-group solidarity and out-group distance. The structure of society, in terms of the number and relative strengths of thus-defined groups, is believed to influence social stability and development significantly.

Some problems attributed to the impact of linguistic diversity are related to the limited ability of society members to communicate with one another, while other problems at least partially result from identity differences that people infer from the use of different languages. Most scholars believe that diversity of language use is detrimental not only to occupational mobility and efficiency but also to intergroup co-operation and national unity (Pool 1972). Arguably, this is because they consider language as a 'proxy for ethnicity', a supposedly more operational and objective indicator than ethnic identification. As Laitin explains, the '[u]se of language data in this way allows us both to measure the degree of group dispersion within a polity, but also measure (by means of the structural difference between languages) the degree of cultural difference between ethnic groups' (Laitin 2000a: 142–43).

Although scholars have suggested different definitions of linguistic diversity (Pool 1972), currently the dominant approach seems to be the treatment of diversity as a matter of language groups defined by mother tongue or main language of the home. In this approach, the structure of society in terms of language-use groups is considered indicative of the interaction related to both communication and identity. Aspects of the latter included interethnic solidarity and trust, language grievances, the fairness of the state's language policy and, resulting from these and other factors, the likelihood of interethnic co-operation or conflict, political participation and democracy (e.g. Laitin 2000b; Pool 1991; Van Parijs 2006).<sup>1</sup>

Some scholars reject the assumption regarding the one-to-one correspondence between ethnicity and language, and treat ethnic and linguistic diversity as separate independent variables when analysing their socio-political impact (e.g. Anderson and Paskeviciute 2006). Yet even in this case, linguistic diversity is conceived as being limited to language use, while identity matters are accounted for by ethnic grouping. Even those authors recognising the discrepancy between the language learned first and the language used most actively at present as evidence of a shift in individual language behaviour, or the discrepancy between the main language of parents and children as evidence of an inter-generational language shift (Lieberson and Curry 1971; Stevens 1992), do not seem to admit possible incongruity between changes in language practice and identity. The very notion of language maintenance as 'loyalty' (Fishman *et al.* 1966) implies that people can only be loyal to a language by speaking it, usually in accordance with their ethnic identity. Therefore, once people change their main language of use they are considered likely to change their ethnic identity eventually, or at least not pass it on to the next generation (Gorenburg 2006; Pool 1979). In some cases, ethnic identity can be sustained by religious, political or other affiliation – but then language is not supposed to be an important part of that identity (Liebkind 1999).

Several strands of research challenge this view. To begin with, studies of various multilingual societies show that people may not only use different languages in different situations but also identify with more than one language. For example, students of a Dutch language school in Brussels combine identifications with different linguistic and territorial groups; the relative frequency of identifications depends primarily on what language or languages are used at home (Ceullers 2008). Moreover, the identification with a language does not always result from its use; people can feel attached to a language they never speak and are hardly able to speak. In particular, people often identify strongly with the language of their perceived ethnic group, even if they shifted to another language at some stage in life or did not even learn it in childhood. This pertains in particular to languages of migrants, minorities or otherwise subordinate groups whom the social environment urges to abandon their languages in favour of the dominant one. Thus, a study of Basque Americans found that most of them maintain favourable attitudes towards the Basque language even though few can speak it (Lasagabaster

2008). More remarkably, the case of Ireland shows, as Liebkind put it, that 'people can use a language (English) for the socioeconomic and other advantages it offers even though they hold intrinsically unfavorable attitudes towards that language that contrasts with the favorable attitudes maintained toward their ethnic language. Language use or language proficiency, consequently, should not be confused with linguistic identity' (Liebkind 1999: 144). In Northern Ireland, this difference of attitudes was manifested in responses to a census question on proficiency in Irish, which were largely informed by people's perception of that language as an essential part of their Irish identity (McMonagle 2009).

In the context of identity struggle in society, the interpretation of census questions on mother tongue, use or proficiency in terms of group allegiance transforms people's responses into statements of preferences regarding the country's future and the state's policy. In particular, by declaring a language their mother tongue people often express their support for its use in society and promotion by the state, even if they do not back this preference by their own language practice (Arel 2002a). However, these identity preferences are not limited to language matters and pertain also to policies in other domains where national identity is both manifested and constructed, such as national symbols, historical memory, citizenship and foreign policy. It is radically different views of such identity-related issues that primarily hinder inter-group co-operation and undermine national unity and political stability in multilingual societies.

One influential conceptualisation of this effect is the view of the political process as influenced by long-lasting divisions, or cleavages in society such as those defined by class, region, religion, ethnicity or race. Originally perceived in terms of their impact on the party structure and voting behaviour, these cleavages were later reconsidered to include various conflicts in society that can at times become foci of political confrontation (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Stoll 2004; Zuckerman 1975). Language has been analysed among social factors of political cleavages<sup>2</sup> in multilingual societies, but its effect has been related to differences in practice – being measured, for instance, by the language usually spoken at home (Norris 2004). However, because political cleavages are not just 'divisions around ascriptive traits' but conflicting groups deriving their identities from such traits (Stoll 2004: 18), language identity should be a more important determinant of a cleavage than language practice.

As with all beliefs, attitudes towards languages result from the interaction of institutional discourses with personal and group experiences and dispositions, hence people can differ in their attitudes and, accordingly, in identifications with a particular language or languages. Moreover, discourses of different state institutions compete among themselves and with those of ethno-cultural and other organisations – particularly in the case of subordinate groups, whom the competing discourses urge to choose between their group language and the dominant one. The result can be either identification

with one of these languages or a combination of the two (even more so for people of mixed origin). The census question on mother tongue is one influential way of registering this choice and, at the same time, reinforcing it by making it more meaningful and socially significant – thus taking into account language identity as an element and factor of (ethno-) linguistic diversity. It is this census practice that has taught people to make a rather steady and meaningful choice of ‘their’ language that allows me to quantify the identity-oriented reconceptualisation of diversity in the case of Ukraine. Although I base the quantification on survey responses rather than census ones, I believe that the former are largely informed by the latter.

### **Language and identity in Soviet and post-Soviet Ukraine**

The large-scale discrepancy between language practice and identity in contemporary Ukraine (and many other post-Soviet states) is a result of the Soviet interaction between, on the one hand, those policies/discourses promoting increased use of Russian as a language of social mobility and inter-ethnic integration and, on the other, those prescribing the correlation between ethnic groups (in Soviet lexicon, nationalities) and their eponymous languages. While the former policies gradually, albeit unevenly, increased the number of non-Russians speaking mainly Russian in their everyday life, the latter impeded the translation of this language shift into a change of ethnic and/or linguistic identity.

As far as the policy with regard to citizens’ language practice is concerned, the Soviet decades can be divided into two main periods. During most of the 1920s and the early 1930s, the regime encouraged the learning and use by all citizens of the languages of their (putative) ethnic groups, which were referred to as those people’s ‘native languages’. Given earlier linguistic assimilation – or newly found/prescribed ethnic roots – thus-defined native language deviated significantly from the language of preference, but the state wanted people to ‘revert’ to the former in their everyday practice (Arel 2002a; Slezkine 1994). The decade of the so-called indigenisation brought about an impressive increase in the mastery and public use of dozens of languages, first and foremost those of the titular nationalities of union and autonomous republics. In Ukraine, the main result was a drastic increase in the use of Ukrainian in those prestigious domains and heavily urbanised regions where Russian had dominated during the czarist rule (Krawchenko 1985; Martin 2001).

However, after the mid-1930s the language policy of the Soviet regime changed radically, with the strategy of fostering individual and group identities being replaced by that of promoting social integration on the union and republic levels. Educational and cultural facilities in languages other than the titular ones and Russian were mostly abolished (Martin 2001). Although titular languages continued to be used in many public domains, the primary promotion of Russian made them less prestigious and useful. From the late

1950s, a major shift in education policy facilitated the translation of these changed preferences into changed patterns of language acquisition: a new education law replaced the principle of instruction in the child's native language – usually understood in this regard as the language of his/her nationality – with the principle of free parental choice (Bilinsky 1962). In Ukraine, this policy led to a drastic decline in titular language education in most urban centres from the 1960s until the mid-1980s, except in western regions, where the regime tolerated high national awareness moulded by the particular historical experience of the territories that only became part of the USSR during World War II. As a result, not only did a considerable proportion of ethnic Ukrainians come to speak Russian as their main language, but many of them had little or no knowledge of Ukrainian (Kaiser 1994; Szporluk 2000).

However, the change in language competence and use was not accompanied by a commensurate change in linguistic and ethno-cultural identities. For a long time, Western students of the language processes in the USSR considered the census-measured degree of acceptance of Russian as the native language to be a realistic indicator of the scale of linguistic assimilation among various ethnic groups (e.g. Silver 1974). However, an obvious discrepancy between the level of thus-perceived assimilation and observed linguistic practice eventually made scholars realise that the declaration of a certain native language reflected not so much communicative competence or practice as loyalty to the eponymous ethnic group whose distinguishing feature was considered to be the possession of this language. Rather than evidence of a low level of linguistic assimilation, the generally low percentage of non-Russians regarding Russian as their native language came to be understood as indicating 'a high level of ethnic self assurance' (Karklins 1980: 421).

The common retention of ethno-linguistic identity, despite an obvious shift in communicative competence and use, was made possible not only by cultural inertia but also by public discourses and practices supporting the existence of separate nations distinguishable primarily by their eponymous languages, and of these languages as the nations' most natural and valuable attributes. Even at the time of the most active promotion of the Russian language and the prosecution of non-Russian nationalism, the 'continued existence of nationally defined communities and the legitimacy of their claims to particular cultural, territorial and political identities . . . was never in doubt' (Slezkine 1994: 441). Although the full correspondence between ethnicity and language ceased to be considered the only conceivable norm on the individual level, language was still accepted as an important characteristic of the nation and a crucial means of its self-expression, a belief supported by a number of institutions in the republics using their titular languages exclusively or on a par with Russian (Kulyk 2006).

The reverse side of the conceptual decoupling of native language and language of everyday use was a much larger gap between language practice

and ethnic identity than the census data showed. This gap was fully revealed by mass surveys that became routine in Ukraine only after the break-up of the USSR.<sup>3</sup> According to one annual series of surveys, less than half of Ukrainian residents prefer to use Ukrainian in communication with a supposedly bilingual and accommodating interviewer; this is a huge difference from the almost two thirds who considered Ukrainian to be their native language. The surveys also showed a more pronounced regional differentiation, with the preference for Ukrainian diminishing gradually from more than ninety per cent in the west to slightly above ten per cent in the south-east (Arel 1995; Khmelko 2004). Another survey series revealed that Ukrainian is used in family communication by just above a third of respondents – not much more than the share of people using Russian. With relatively few people speaking other languages, the remaining part comprises mostly those who combine the two (Rezultaty 2006: 482). Remarkably, the preference for Ukrainian according to either criterion has not become much stronger in the years since Ukraine became an independent state and the titular language was granted the status of its sole official (state) language. The preservation of the status quo has been facilitated by an ambivalent state policy that sought to promote Ukrainian without prohibiting or, in most cases, even inhibiting the use of Russian in the public domain. While relatively successful in containing language grievances, this policy allowed the continued prevalence of Russian in most social practices, particularly in the south-eastern regions (Kulyk 2006; Søvik 2007).

Notwithstanding this containment on the mass level, from the early years of independence the use and status of languages was made into an issue by political elites from the east and south seeking to utilise Russian speakers' discontent with the increasing presence of Ukrainian in various domains, which many feared might eventually lead to the exclusion of Russian. Since Russian in independent Ukraine found itself demoted to the level of a minority language, an upgrade of its legal status became one of the most persistent and most divisive issues in Ukrainian politics, and played a crucial role in several election campaigns (Arel 1995; Kulyk 2009; Wolczuk 2007). As some studies demonstrated, popular support for those candidates and parties seen as champions of their respective languages correlated significantly with everyday language use, which thus appears as one of the main cleavages in Ukrainian politics. Similarly, language use was found to strongly influence popular views of certain political issues – particularly the status of the Russian language and relations with Russia, two inter-related parts of a complex issue some authors referred to as the 'Russian question' (Arel and Khmelko 1996; Hesli *et al.* 1998). However, other studies showed that both electoral choice and survey-measured attitudes are more dependent on the region of residence, the impact of which largely reflects a specific political culture related to historical experience and is thus not reducible to the demographic profile (Barrington 2002; Kravchuk and Chudowsky 2005; Wilson and Birch 1999).

While linguistic, regional and other components of political polarisation have been examined thoroughly, the contributions of practice and identity to

the language cleavage remain unexplored. The post-Soviet ambivalence reproduced the gap between the language of preference and native language, the latter being no less stable than the former. In the first post-Soviet census of 2001, the proportion of people declaring Ukrainian their native language increased slightly, although not as much as that of self-declared ethnic Ukrainians (Pro kil'kist' 2003). At the same time, the census campaign provided further evidence that for many people, native language means 'who you are, not what you speak' (Arel 2002b: 238). The inadequacy of native language as an indicator of communicative practice led ever more students of post-Soviet Ukraine to disregard it as a determinant of policy preferences and attitudes – even those concerned with language. This disregard was augmented by the perceived irrelevance of native language as a factor of electoral polarisation, which contrasted with the high significance of the language of preference (Arel 2006). Moreover, the realisation of a strong connection between native language and ethnicity made many scholars view the former as largely tautological to the latter, and therefore redundant. This was manifested by not including native language among demographic indicators in their survey questionnaires (e.g. Barrington 2002; Khmelko 2004; Søvik 2007).<sup>4</sup> Most Western studies of the language situation in Ukraine came to perceive language groups in terms of everyday language, even though some scholars expressed caution that in this way, 'the possible symbolic role of language in identity is overlooked' (Fournier 2002: 420). Remarkably, those researchers who delegitimised the census reports on native language did not question the similarly self-reported data on ethnicity, thus revealing their essentialist treatment of the latter category as somehow more real rather than socially constructed.

The perceived analytical uselessness of native language was reinforced by the realisation of the various meanings the term might have for people responding to the census questionnaire. Arguably, this variation was facilitated by the Soviet practice of registering native language on the basis of respondents' declarations without giving them instructions on what the concept should mean, in contrast to the practices of some other states (Arel 2002a; Silver 1978). In a study that sought to ascertain the likelihood of different interpretations in post-Soviet Ukraine, Aza (1995) found that people most frequently saw native language as the language of either their thinking (forty per cent) or their nationality (thirty-seven per cent), with the interpretation as the main language of speaking lagging far behind (fifteen per cent). Moreover, while ethnic Ukrainians were divided evenly between the two most popular interpretations, most ethnic Russians related native language to thinking. Fifteen years later, the two most popular answers remained intact but the relation of native language to one's speech was overshadowed by its interpretation as the language of one's parents (Shul'ga 2009).

Focus-group discussions administered by the Hromadska Dumka centre in five Ukrainian cities (Donetsk, Kyiv, Lutsk, Lviv and Odesa) in November 2006 showed that the language of thinking and the language of the family



were two prevalent alternatives. The language of communicative practice was generally believed to coincide with that of family on the one hand and that of thought on the other, although a number of people singled out practice as the main criterion of native language. The relation of native language to nationality was much less prevalent, but several respondents offered their understanding of it as the language of one's 'kin' [*rodu*], country or even state. Some people resolved a controversy between their perception of Ukrainian as the language of nation/state and Russian as that of communication by embracing both languages as native. Others, in contrast, clearly preferred the language of their parents/ancestors or nation/state to that of their current practice.

Whatever the understanding, the answers revealed that the concept was quite meaningful and important to the discussants and that, with few exceptions, each of them had only one and supposedly fixed language that for some reason had become, in the words of one speaker, 'closer to your soul' (Kyiv, age 18–30). This is why I follow neither those scholars who wanted to use the native-language declaration (even in view of their indeterminacy) as somehow reflecting language practice (e.g. Silver 1978) nor those who, precisely because of the indeterminacy, discarded this data as irreparably unreliable (e.g. Arel and Khmelko 1996). Instead, I treat this declaration as an indicator of language identity irreducible to ethnicity or communicative practice. I seek to ascertain its impact on language attitudes and policy preferences and, therefore, its contribution to linguistic diversity and political cleavages.

### **Data and methodology**

With the exception of the focus-group discussions referred to earlier, the data used in this article resulted from a representative nationwide mass survey ( $N = 2015$ ) conducted by the Hromadska Dumka centre in December 2006. I analysed responses to several types of questions in order to discern how the respondents' views and preferences were related to their language practices and ethno-linguistic identities. Unlike many studies of language attitudes in Ukraine and elsewhere that were based on a few or even a single survey question, the use of numerous questions makes it possible to account for differences between the specific issues that the respondents were asked about.

In contrast to censuses intended to divide the population into mutually exclusive categories, surveys can – but not always do – allow the respondents to declare mixed identities and complex repertoires. This augmentation of the list of alternatives helps the respondents to assess their identities and practices more correctly, which is particularly important in countries such as Ukraine, with shifting patterns of language use and a large discrepancy between identity and practice. At the same time, the formation of mixed ethnic identities is impeded by the dominant perception of ethnic categories as

mutually exclusive. The survey confirmed that mixed identifications are much less likely with regard to ethnicity than language (0.7 vs. 11 per cent of the sample).<sup>5</sup>

The main method used to determine the impact of practices and identities on respondents' attitudes is regression analysis with different sets of independent variables according to specific research hypotheses. Because the dependent variables in individual-level analysis are categorical rather than continuous, linear regressions are inappropriate. In order to assess the impact of practices and identities on the distribution of responses in general rather than relative frequencies of certain responses in particular, ordinal logistic regression is preferred to a multinomial one. However, because the data violated the parallel-lines assumption, I combined certain categories of the dependent variable to apply binary logistic regression. To minimise the resulting loss of information, I preferred to use the latter method for those questions where the distribution of frequencies was close to binary (i.e. all but two responses are infrequent) or where responses were grouped easily into two categories (e.g. 'completely disagree' and 'rather disagree' vs. 'rather agree' and 'completely agree').

Furthermore, I was interested in the explanatory power of certain variables (such as the language of everyday use) rather than the impact of their particular values (such as speaking only Ukrainian). Therefore, I sought to arrange provided alternatives so that they reflected gradual change of the respective variable according to its hypothesised impact on attitudes (e.g. from speaking only Ukrainian, to combining the two languages, to speaking only Russian). For this purpose, I excluded those cases with identities or languages other than Ukrainian and Russian, because it would be impossible to plausibly locate them between the choices related to the two main languages. This exclusion is unlikely to cause a significant distortion because the share of such respondents did not exceed two per cent. To make the impact of hypothetically competitive variables commensurate, I equalised their scales by recoding responses to those questions with the number of alternatives exceeding the tripartite structure for native language (Ukrainian – both – Russian). The only exceptions were sex (there is no interim category) and ethnicity (the very low number of people with mixed identity made it preferable to exclude this group in order to avoid distortions caused by a high percentage of empty cells). Finally, although for categorical predictors logistic regressions yielded coefficients for specific values rather than variables in general, the ordering of predictors' values made it possible to assess the impact of their across-the-range change by coefficients for the lowest values, ones opposite to those for which the coefficients are set at zero.

For each selected question, I proceeded through several steps with different sets of independent variables intended to investigate a certain kind of relationship between them and the attitudes they influence. I began with variables pertaining to individual characteristics, which are traditionally believed to be the most likely determinants of language attitudes and policy

preferences – namely the main language of everyday use (*everyday language*), ethnicity (*nationality*) and, at the second step, *native language*. By running regression analyses with and without the native language variable, I examined whether the latter had an independent impact on language-related attitudes irreducible to ethnic identity and language practice.

In the next step, I added three variables dealing with the social and linguistic environment by which the respondents were likely to be influenced. The *settlement type* variable was intended to examine the potential impact on attitudes stemming from the residence in an urban or rural milieu, which determines dominant patterns of social interaction and language use – with Russian being much more widespread in big cities. The *region* variable was designed to check if a distinct regional culture exerted an independent impact on language attitudes, not reducible to the region's ethnic and linguistic profile. As noted earlier, this issue has been discussed repeatedly in studies of post-Soviet Ukraine, but those studies have mostly analysed attitudes such as foreign-policy orientation or support for democracy rather than preferences regarding language policy itself.<sup>6</sup> The third characteristic of the context is the main language of the respondent's city or village (*locality language*) as declared by the respondent.<sup>7</sup> Using this variable, I intended to examine the impact of locality as distinct from that of the region, and the impact of the settlement's linguistic environment as distinct from that of its type and size.

In the final step, I supplemented the set with a variable pertaining to the respondents' political orientation, which may have a strong independent impact on attitudes and policy preferences. Because party affiliation is only relevant for a small minority of Ukrainian citizens and the rapidly changing party structure hinders the identification of voters with specific political forces, *political orientation* was measured in this survey as the declared support for certain 'ideological-political trends' [*ideino-politychni napriamky*]. In view of the positions of parties seen as representing these trends on the issues under consideration (and mean values of their supporters' responses), the trends were arranged on a spectrum from 'national democrats' and 'national radicals' (subsumed under the category of 'Ukrainian nationalists') to supporters of the 'political trend combining the ideas of market economy and ideas of Ukraine's reunification with Russia', with all others in an interim category. Unfortunately, almost a third of respondents failed to choose any of the listed trends, which led to a radical shrinkage of the sample for this stage of analysis and, accordingly, less reliable results. In the same step, I added standard socio-demographic variables, namely *sex*, *age*, *education* and (self-assessed) economic *wellbeing*. While not expected to exert a strong influence on language-related attitudes, these variables may somewhat modify the relative strengths of other, supposedly more important factors.

Some of the variables were correlated rather highly to one another, reflecting the interdependence of the respective practices/perceptions. Not surprisingly, native language was related closely to nationality on the one hand ( $r = 0.64$ ) and everyday language on the other ( $r = 0.69$ ). At the same

time, the two correlation levels disproved the belief mentioned earlier that native language is much closer to ethnicity than language practice. Furthermore, everyday language correlated strongly with region ( $r = 0.67$ ) and locality language ( $r = 0.75$ ), which also correlated to each other ( $r = 0.69$ ). However, the tolerance check for linear regression with this set yielded values above 0.3 for all variables; most scholars would believe that this ensures multicollinearity will not be a problem for either linear or nonlinear analysis.

### **Impact on the preferences regarding language politics**

The survey questions analysed in this article cover different attitudes regarding both language use and other domains, the respondents' views of which might be affected by their language practice and identity. In the first category, I chose two questions dealing with different aspects of language politics. The first of them asked what 'the state's policy in the language domain' should primarily do: 48.5 per cent opted for the promotion of the spread of Ukrainian in all domains while 39.3 per cent preferred the state to solve the issue of the status of Russian. The third option, the implementation of minority rights in language domain, was chosen by many fewer respondents – 7.0 per cent of the sample. The second question pertained to preferences regarding the 'language situation in Ukraine in the future', asking respondents to choose between the prevalence of either language and the country's bilingualism. The declared preferences mirrored those for the state's policy, thus manifesting popular ambivalence on language matters. The two most popular options turned out to be Ukraine becoming a 'bilingual country' and Ukrainian becoming the 'main language in all communicative domains', which were supported by 46.2 and 38.7 per cent of respondents, respectively, with the prevalence of Russian at a relatively low level of 6.0 per cent.

The expected dependence of responses on factors measured by independent variables resulted from respondents' support for the wider use and adequate promotion of a language (or languages) that they use in their own practice, or value as an element of their individual identity and that of their group/country. It is thus hypothesised that ethnic Ukrainians, people with Ukrainian as both their native and everyday language, residents of western regions, villages and predominantly Ukrainian-speaking localities and supporters of Ukrainian nationalism tend to prefer the state's policy promoting the use of Ukrainian and the prevalence of this language in the future. In contrast, ethnic Russians, Russophones, residents of the east, big cities and predominantly Russian-speaking localities and supporters of 'reunification' with Russia are likely to prefer policies treating Russian at least on a par with Ukrainian, and social bilingualism or the prevalence of Russian as a perspective. The regression analysis is intended to reveal the relative importance of these factors. The nearly binary structure of responses makes both questions good candidates for binary logistic regression. To make the

dependent variable strictly binary, the third group of responses has to be excluded from the question on state policy: this group pertains to a qualitatively different preference from the other two. In contrast, the responses in favour of the prevalence of Russian in the future can be combined with those supporting bilingualism because in contemporary Ukraine the former can be considered an extreme form of the latter.

The results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 1. To keep the table legible, I only included coefficients for the lowest value of each variable, which I view as a measure of the variable's overall impact on the attitudes under consideration given that the coefficients for the highest values are set at zero.<sup>8</sup> For the same purpose, I only provided the logit coefficients, or logs of the odds, but not the odds themselves, which, while more informative in terms of the strength of impacts under consideration, are less convenient to compare with one another as I intended to do. Although the two survey questions under consideration pertained to considerably different aspects of language politics, the relative explanatory powers of the variables and their patterns of change from one model to the next were rather similar. As predicted, the demographic variables did not affect the relative explanatory powers of other more important predictors. As the consistent signs and considerable absolute values of virtually all coefficients for these predictors demonstrated, the hypothesised direction of change in preferences was confirmed. But it is the relative strengths of the predictors' impacts that are of particular relevance to my main argument.

In model 1, both everyday language and nationality were significant for each question but the contribution of the former variable was much greater, making it the main predictor of language attitudes – apparently in accordance with the established view. However, when native language was added in model 2, its importance turned out to be comparable with that of everyday language and much greater than that of nationality, particularly for the question on language situation. This provides clear evidence that linguistic identity is an important complement to language use in shaping language-related preferences and that it is much more relevant in this regard than ethnic identity, which, therefore, may not adequately serve as its substitute. The third model reinforced this evidence by further decreasing the coefficients for everyday language (more than for native language), whose apparent contributions turned out to be largely transferring the impacts of contextual variables. In both cases, native language thus emerged as one of the two most important predictors of preferences regarding language politics. The addition of political orientation in model 4 strongly undermined the importance of this predictor for the question on language policy, but this finding should be taken with caution because of the shrinkage of the sample at this step of analysis, as mentioned earlier.

As far as difference between the two survey questions is concerned, it is worth mentioning that everyday language is more important for preferences regarding the state's language policy and that native language is a better

**Table 1.** Coefficients for binary logistic regression of preferences regarding the language situation in the future and the primary task of the state's language policy (standard errors in parentheses)

	Primary task of language policy				Language situation in the future			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Nationality	-1.396*** (0.183)	-0.757*** (0.209)	-0.821*** (0.236)	-1.253** (0.288)	-2.037*** (0.261)	-0.965** (0.296)	-1.051** (0.326)	-1.341*** (0.411)
Everyday language	-2.686*** (0.159)	-2.055*** (0.181)	-1.630*** (0.249)	-1.452*** (0.310)	-3.082*** (0.162)	-2.159*** (0.184)	-1.441*** (0.245)	-1.352*** (0.304)
Native language		-1.339*** (0.187)	-1.031*** (0.222)	-0.522 <sup>†</sup> (0.269)		-2.114*** (0.225)	-2.037*** (0.259)	-1.775*** (0.305)
Region			-1.080*** (0.285)	-0.779*** (0.214)			-2.050*** (0.327)	-2.014*** (0.441)
Settlement type			-0.966*** (0.196)	-0.884*** (0.240)			-0.578*** (0.203)	0.031 (0.257)
Locality language			-0.865*** (0.265)	-1.131*** (0.326)			-0.608** (0.269)	-0.357 (0.324)
Political orientation				-1.391*** (0.264)				-1.451*** (0.298)
Sex				0.007 (0.174)				-0.105 (0.192)
Age				-0.495* (0.240)				0.050 (0.271)
Education				-0.163 (0.290)				0.412 (0.318)
Wellbeing				0.590* (0.272)				0.863*** (0.312)
Constant	2.110*** (0.163)	2.109*** (0.163)	3.060*** (0.257)	3.478*** (0.469)	3.289*** (0.248)	3.288*** (0.250)	3.967*** (0.337)	3.509*** (0.562)
Log-likelihood	1616.7	1560.8	1284.3	884.4	1510.8	1390.0	1113.4	733.2
N	1668	1667	1525	1075	1734	1733	1578	1120

<sup>†</sup>  $p < 0.1$ .  
\*  $p < 0.05$ .  
\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .  
\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

indicator of respondents' views of the language situation in the future. It can be hypothesised that while people are more likely to experience and assess the state's policy in accordance with their language competence and practice, their preferences regarding language use in society are shaped largely by identities. Furthermore, for the second question the region had the greatest explanatory power of all contextual predictors, in accordance with the view of a region's social and cultural profile as an important factor influencing its residents' attitudes. However, for the first question the contribution of this variable was comparable with those of locality language and settlement type, which is rather surprising given that the idea of upgrading the status of Russian (one of the options the respondents were given) has repeatedly been used as a mobilising issue on a regional level. It appears that people perceive the issue of statuses also in terms of its correspondence to the local patterns of language use, hence the support for an upgrading of the status of Russian is stronger in those places where it prevails (or so people believe) in everyday interaction. The greater importance of the region for the second question can be explained by the fact that this variable encompasses both communication and identity, while the other two contextual predictors concern communication only. These tentative explanations need to be tested in further analyses.

### **Impact on the preferences regarding other divisive issues**

My analysis has clearly demonstrated the importance of language identity as a factor influencing the respondents' preferences with regard to processes and policies concerning language itself. While this significantly modifies the established perception of ethno-linguistic diversity, it does not in itself say much about the function of the latter as a political cleavage, which is what makes this diversity so interesting to political scientists. To understand this function, we need to analyse the impacts of the above predictors on attitudes regarding other issues that divide the society under consideration and see what factors primarily account for the division. The relative importance of practice and identity to a perceptible cleavage associated with language is of particular interest to my argument. In contemporary Ukraine, such divisive issues include first and foremost foreign policy and historical memory (Arel 1995; Wolczuk 2007), so I analyse responses to two of the survey questions dealing with these domains.

The first chosen question asked the respondents whether they believed Ukraine's future lay in a union with Russia and Belarus. This issue remained at the heart of political and social polarisation throughout independence (Munro 2007; Shulman 2002). Just over half (50.2 per cent) of the respondents fully or somewhat agreed with the statement, 27.8 per cent fully or somewhat disagreed, and 18.5 per cent declared an ambivalent attitude. The second question pertained to the respondents' attitudes towards Stepan Bandera, a symbol of Ukrainian nationalist resistance to the Soviet regime during and after World War II. Contemporary Ukrainian nationalists glorify Bandera as

a national hero and their pro-Russian opponents condemn him as a Nazi collaborator. Accordingly, attempts by local authorities in western Ukraine and (after the Orange Revolution of 2004) by President Viktor Yushchenko to rehabilitate Bandera and other figures of the World War II nationalist resistance were resolutely opposed by parties primarily representing the eastern and southern constituencies (Motyl 2010). While 32.3 per cent of the respondents viewed Bandera positively or rather positively, 51.0 per cent declared more or less negative attitudes. It can be expected that most residents of the east, ethnic Russians, Russian speakers and adherents of the 'reunification' trend prefer integration with Russia and hold negative attitudes towards Bandera, while westerners, Ukrainians, Ukrainian speakers and Ukrainian nationalists are more cautious in the first case and more supportive in the second. Both the identity and practice dimensions of language can influence the respondents' preferences, but for these two questions there is more reason to expect the primacy of the former aspect than for those questions regarding language use itself. Unlike with language-related attitudes, here I do not have definite expectations regarding the independent effects of the linguistic environment or settlement type. I use the same succession of models described earlier, and only present coefficients for the lowest value of each predictor.

As Table 2 demonstrates, the general pattern of the relative power of the predictors and their change from one model to the next is similar to the one for the preferences regarding language politics. The demographic variables are insignificant, with one exception that does not affect the relative strengths of more important predictors. Everyday language is more powerful than ethnicity in model 1, but in the following models native language turns out to be as important, or much more important, compared to everyday language. In contrast to Table 1, everyday language not only loses its power but becomes almost or completely insignificant. Moreover, the addition of political orientation in model 4 reinforces the leading position of native language among ethno-linguistic variables. Language identity thus emerges as the primary factor of the ethno-linguistic cleavage, its contribution far exceeding that of language practice. The region is once again the most powerful of the contextual predictors, which confirms a strong regional cleavage in Ukrainian society.

The greater power of ethnicity for the question on Bandera is not surprising: his image as a Ukrainian nationalist fighter against the Soviets/Russians is bound to evoke stronger ethnic feelings within both groups than the issue of a supranational union. (It is remarkable that native language is nevertheless more powerful than ethnicity.) The greater role of ethno-cultural identity for the Bandera question than for the union one helps to explain the greater importance of region in the former case and the lesser importance of settlement type, political orientation and (before the addition of the latter) everyday language. However, it is surprising that locality language is more important for attitudes towards Bandera than for views of a union with Russia. But then this opaque finding does not affect the clear pattern of the relationship between the main predictors.



**Table 2.** Coefficients for binary logistic regression of attitudes towards Ukraine's possible union with Russia and Belarus, and towards Stepan Bandera (standard errors in parentheses)

	Union with Russia and Belarus					Stepan Bandera				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2
Nationality	-0.944*** (0.214)	-0.428 <sup>†</sup> (0.249)	-0.343 (0.266)	-0.183 (0.345)	-1.202*** (0.199)	-0.637** (0.229)	-0.767** (0.243)	-0.677* (0.296)		
Everyday language	-1.662*** (0.148)	-1.127*** (0.172)	-0.435 <sup>†</sup> (0.236)	-0.300 (0.298)	-1.574*** (0.141)	-1.033*** (0.165)	-0.088 (0.220)	0.204 (0.286)		
Native language		-1.073*** (0.214)	-0.998*** (0.250)	-1.306*** (0.324)		-1.162*** (0.198)	-0.891*** (0.225)	-1.015*** (0.285)		
Region			-2.160*** (0.303)	-1.702*** (0.303)			-1.651*** (0.235)	-1.260*** (0.311)		
Settlement type			-0.589*** (0.169)	-0.556* (0.227)			0.046 (0.161)	0.121 (0.214)		
Locality language			0.046 (0.254)	0.542** (0.269)			-0.559* (0.233)	-0.816** (0.300)		
Political orientation				-1.947*** (0.299)				-1.156*** (0.255)		
Sex				-0.023 (0.164)				0.262 (0.161)		
Age				-0.171 (0.233)				-0.191 (0.223)		
Education				0.042 (0.282)				-0.354 (0.268)		
Wellbeing				0.310 (0.269)				0.631* (0.249)		
Constant	2.559*** (0.188)	2.531*** (0.188)	3.074*** (0.248)	3.949*** (0.483)	2.261*** (0.176)	2.266*** (0.177)	2.291*** (0.231)	2.138*** (0.422)		
Log-likelihood	1921.1	1877.6	1551.7	969.4	1872.5	1832.7	1568.7	997.2		
N	1819	1818	1657	1162	1642	1641	1515	1076		

<sup>†</sup>  $p < 0.1$ .\*  $p < 0.05$ .\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that language identity is a no less powerful predictor of Ukrainian citizens' attitudes and policy preferences than language use. Therefore, these two facets of people's language profile should be used as complementary criteria in defining language groups and measuring the linguistic diversity of society. This pertains not only to language matters where the correlation between people's identifications with a particular language and their support for developments and policies favouring it might seem obvious (even though language practice has mostly been seen as a correlate for such support). Language identity also influences people's views of other culturally sensitive issues, including (but arguably not limited to) those of foreign policy and historical memory. It is thus an important political cleavage and a crucial factor of social fragmentation since the latter concerns not only people's inability to interact with one another but also their reluctance to do so. If language diversity, as is widely believed, hinders national unity and governmental effectiveness, it is because of differences not only in the language people speak but also, or even primarily, in the language they care about. While it is true that people are not only attached to languages but also to other cultural features and other people with whom they share those features, language identity is no more congruous with ethno-cultural belonging than with language practice.

How applicable are these findings to cases other than Ukrainian? It is clear that a large-scale discrepancy between language practices and ethno-cultural identities can be found in many countries across the globe. This pertains, in particular, to those states or autonomous units characterised by mass migration rapidly changing the communication repertoires of newcomers, or to those where authoritative discourses on ethno-cultural matters affect the identity structure of 'autochthonous' majorities and make them attached to ancestral languages they do not use much, or at all. Thus, on the one hand, Turkish immigrants in Germany or Latin Americans in the USA and, on the other, members of the eponymous majorities in Ireland or the Basque Country can be expected to have a linguistic identity different from their language practice. However, the problem is that to make it possible to account for the variation in individual identities as an element of society's linguistic diversity, all members should be urged to make a steady and socially meaningful choice between the different languages to which they are attached, and this requires a general institutionalised practice such as the use of language identity as a category in personal documents or at least in censuses. This institutionally informed choice might then be perceived as indicative of attitudes and policy preferences that the state should take into account.

Further studies are necessary to determine what characteristic may be treated as language identity in a particular country. However, it seems that in those countries having census questions on native language or mother tongue (especially if they do not guide respondents to a specific communication-

related meaning) this notion can be dealt with in a similar way to my treatment of Ukraine. The responses to these questions should be perceived as indicative not so much of language practice as of identities; if censuses inquire about both native and main spoken language, data on the former are no less relevant to studies of linguistic diversity and political cleavages than are data on the latter. First and foremost, this pertains to other post-Soviet countries in which native language was used before and, in many cases, is used after the proclamation of their independence similarly to its use in Ukraine. It is with data from these countries that my findings can most easily be tested.

## Notes

1 Laitin (2000b) argued that because of the double nature of language and culture, which have 'both an identity and a strategic component', some effects (e.g. assimilation) are primarily dependent on the former and others (e.g. inter-group violence) on the latter.

2 These factors are often called social cleavages, although some authors use the term for resulting political conflicts. For a discussion of the relationship between social and political cleavages, see Zuckerman (1975).

3 For similar data on ethnic groups in Russia, see Gorenburg (2006).

4 Similar lack of interest in native language is characteristic of studies of language policies in other post-Soviet countries. Most authors do not mention the concept at all; the few who do state that it does not reflect language use and leave it at that.

5 Some studies found a much higher frequency of mixed ethnic identity (Arel 2006).

6 To be sure, the impact of the region variable depends on both the division of the country into a certain number of regions and their arrangement in accordance with the expected change of an effect under consideration. I rely on the traditional tripartite structure (west–centre–east/south), which ensures consistent change of the mean values of all dependent variables. Because I am only interested in the importance of the region variable in comparison with other individual and contextual predictors, this crude division is adequate, even though it ignores subtle differences within each macro-region. Finer divisions would increase the variable's explanatory power, but such uneven refinement would upset the comparability of the variables' impacts, which is of primary importance for my analysis.

7 Here, I exclude the environment of *surzhyk*, non-standard speech containing elements of both Ukrainian and Russian (reported by 9.7 per cent of respondents) because it cannot be adequately arranged on a scale between the prevalence of either language. An alternative solution could be to combine the reports of this environment with those referring to the use of both languages, but this would mean lumping together assessments of the speech varieties' frequency and quality. Anthropological research has shown that people attach the label of *surzhyk* both to a perceived mixture of languages and to speech they consider imperfect (Bilaniuk 2005).

8 For virtually all three point variables with a significant impact, the coefficients for the interim values are much smaller than for the lowest values. However, in a few cases the coefficient for the interim value is significant while the one for the lowest value is not. Because such significant coefficients indicate the considerable explanatory power of respective variables, I include them in both Tables 1 and 2 instead of those for the lowest value, but point to their distinctive reference by italicising them.

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